

HISTORY

Our church is dedicated to St Spyridon the Miracle-worker, Bishop of Trimithous. It is called “St Spyridon of the Stadium” or “St Spyridon of Pagrati”, because it is situated near the marble (“Kallimarmaro”) stadium of Athens in the area known as Pagrati. In old documents it is referred to as “St Spyridon of Vatrachonisi (=Frog Island)”, for such was the area’s name up until the first decades of the 20th century.

According to the marble founding inscription at its entrance, the church was founded on the 9th of March 1903, on the same spot where there used to be a chapel dedicated to the Saint. The first architectural plans for the Church of St Spyridon were drawn up by the famous architect Ernst Ziller, but were subsequently modified. In its current form, the church bears the stamp of architect-civil engineer Savvas Boukis from the island of Hydra.

The church is built in the Byzantine style, cross-shaped with a dome, and it covers an area of 461,55 m². The highest point of the dome stands at 25 meters from the church floor.

In the Royal Decree of King George I (ref. no. 3) of 16.04.1912, the Holy Church of St Spyridon –one of the first churches erected in the city of Athens– is registered as the certified Parish of Vatrachonisi. However, it had already been functioning as a Parish for several decades, according to surviving records in the Church Archives.

Like all Orthodox temples in Greece, it constitutes a Legal Entity governed by Public Law and it operates in accordance with the Charter of the Church of Greece, established under Law 590/1975.



Saint Spyridon was born in Cyprus. He took part in the First Ecumenical Council of Nikaia (325 A.D.) where he countered the arguments of Arius and his followers. He died in 348 A.D. His relics repose on the island of Corfu, in a church named after him.

The Parish of St Spyridon of the Stadium is situated in downtown Athens. It is the next oldest and most central parish in the area of Pagrati after the Parish of St Foteini at Ilissos. It stretches from Syntagma square to Merkouri and Eftychidou Streets and from Olgas Street to Vasilissis Sofias Avenue and Formionos Street. The Parish boundaries coincide with those of the Municipality of Athens.

The Parish population is estimated to be about 20,000 residents, 10%-15% of which are foreigners of various nationalities and religions.



Interior view & the Templon of the Church

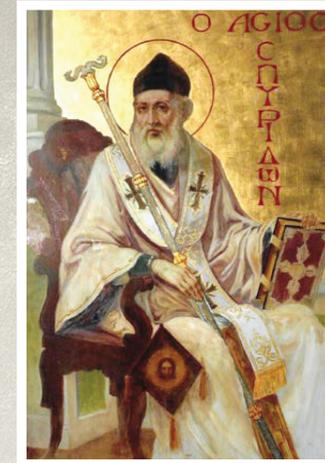
Three Priests work in the Temple today. It is managed, like all the Temples, by a 5-member church council with a cleric as president. From as early as the year 1933, chanting in our church is performed by a large polyphonic choir in the tradition of Ioannes Sakellarides.

ORTHODOX ICONOGRAPHY of the Interior



Mural of the Tabernacle, crafted by Panagiotis and Alexandros Batas.

The iconography of the interior with holy icons and murals did not commence until 1951 and was completed in three phases: The first one began with iconographer Konstantinos Kotsis, who was assigned the depiction of Theotokos Platytera on the apse (1951), and continued with the iconography of the dome and the sanctuary above the tier, as well as the depiction of the Crucifixion and of the Deposition from the Cross in the Nave. The second phase was assigned to the iconographer Panagiotis Batas (1971). The third phase began in 1997 with P. Batas and was completed in 2005 through the collaboration of iconographers Panagiotis Batas and his son Alexandros.



THE GUARDIAN ICON OF THE SAINT

The guardian icon of our Patron Saint Spyridon has a unique style. It is 1,80 m high and 1,02 m wide and is placed on a large wooden shrine at the entrance of the church. An intriguing detail is the inscription of the Saint’s name, because the word “ΑΓΙΟΣ”, written in capitals, is spelled using the Latin letter “G” in place of the Greek “I”.

There is no completion date on the icon. On the bottom left corner there is an inscription: “In memory of Konstantinos and Eleni, Family of Spyridon K. Eftymiou”. This leads us to the assumption that the icon was probably painted between 1933 and 1936, since it was during that time that the name of Spyridon Eftymiou was recorded in the Proceedings of the Parish Board as churchwarden. Below this dedication there is another inscription, “G. Kantzikis”. That is almost certainly the name of the iconographer.

Surely, one cannot help but call attention to and marvel at the icon’s artistic value, its expressiveness, its liveliness, the originality and master execution of the iconographer. The Saint is sitting on a decorated brown armchair, in a serene posture. Behind him there is an opening with a partly visible column. He is dressed in broad white vestments, with a white omophorion draped over his shoulders. He is also wearing an epitachelion adorned with the images of saints and a burgundy-coloured epigonation depicting Jesus Christ. His head is covered in the characteristic shepherd’s hat, brown in colour. In his right hand he is holding a bishop’s staff that is topped by two sculptured serpents, without a cross in the middle. In his left hand, resting upon his left knee, is the Holy Gospel; its cover featuring a large Cross on a red background. The Saint’s face, with his white beard and calm, mellow, joyful expression is brimming with the Divine Light – a distinctive characteristic of a person partaking in God’s glory. His piercing, yet kind, serene and expressive eyes are glowing with paternal love and are gazing deeply (unflinchingly) upon the faithful, who are thus assured that the Saint is listening to their requests. Maybe it was this assurance that the iconographer sought to express by painting the Saint’s left ear larger than normal. He might also be inspired by the pious tradition that St Spyridon heals ear ailments.



The Icon of the Saint on an iconostasis in the right aisle of the church.

This unique icon of St Spyridon is emblematic of our church and it invokes the devoutness and veneration of worshippers who turn their pleas and prayers to Him. Apart from the guardian icon, our church has two more significant icons of the Saint. One of them, also of great artistic value, is decorated by twelve illustrations of St Spyridon's miracles around the image of the Saint himself. The other is a small silver-plated icon of the Saint placed on the iconostasis at the entrance of the church, for the use of worshippers.

OTHER BUILDINGS



At the rear of the church, on its south front, there are adjacent buildings which include the Office of the Clergy, the Parish Hall (constructed in the year 1965) and ancillary facilities.

Over the years, both the interior and exterior of the church have undergone various interventions and renovations. The last renovation took place over the years 1986 to 1990.

CHAPEL OF THE THREE HOLY HIERARCHS



The Chapel of the Three Holy Hierarchs stands opposite to the church, at the corner of 10 Eratosthenous and Konstantinou Versi Streets. Originally, the chapel belonged to the Kalogrides family. It was erected by Demetrios Kalogrides and after his death it was passed down to Ioannis Kalogrides and then to the latter's widow, Panagiota Io. Kalogrides, who donated it to the church. The chapel is stone-built, with a floor area of 38 m². The interior walls are covered in folk art frescoes, most of them time-worn. The date 1887 is visible on the mural above and to the right of the Holy Altar.

There is an interesting story that connects this chapel with the Saint priest Nicholas Planas. It has been preserved by Fotis Kontoglou and repeated by Dimitris Ferousis, who mentions that the Saint used to perform the Divine Liturgy in the Chapel "quite often, having by his side his chanter, Victoria, or, occasionally, either Papadiamantis or Moraitides".

ACTIVITIES

Our Parish takes every possible action in order to address and solve contemporary pastoral problems in all sectors, with special emphasis on the Divine Liturgy, on Holy Sermons and the on Sacrament of Confession.

In the field of charitable work, the Parish Philanthropic Fund makes great efforts to tackle a variety of social issues through its activities. Besides providing financial support and other necessities to parishioners in need, it runs a modern Elderly Care Center ("Home for the Aged"), on 22 Arctinou Street, with a twenty-bed capacity. The Home provides nursing care for elderly people who are socially destitute and, in most cases, poverty-stricken as well.

Our Philanthropic Fund also operates a "Parish Charity Centre", which offers meals and food parcels to around 60 people, and a "Clothing Depot" for the provision of clothes and footwear to those in need. Furthermore, it holds Blood Donation Events twice a year.

Regarding our services towards children and the young people, there is a "Parish Youth Centre" at the corner of 8 Pafsaniou and Arrianiou Streets. Its premises host Sunday Schools and a variety of activities whereby children and teenagers, besides attending Christian catechism classes, are taught traditional Greek dances and music.

Our Parish also used to run a very successful School for Parents, whose operation was interrupted during the corona virus epidemic.

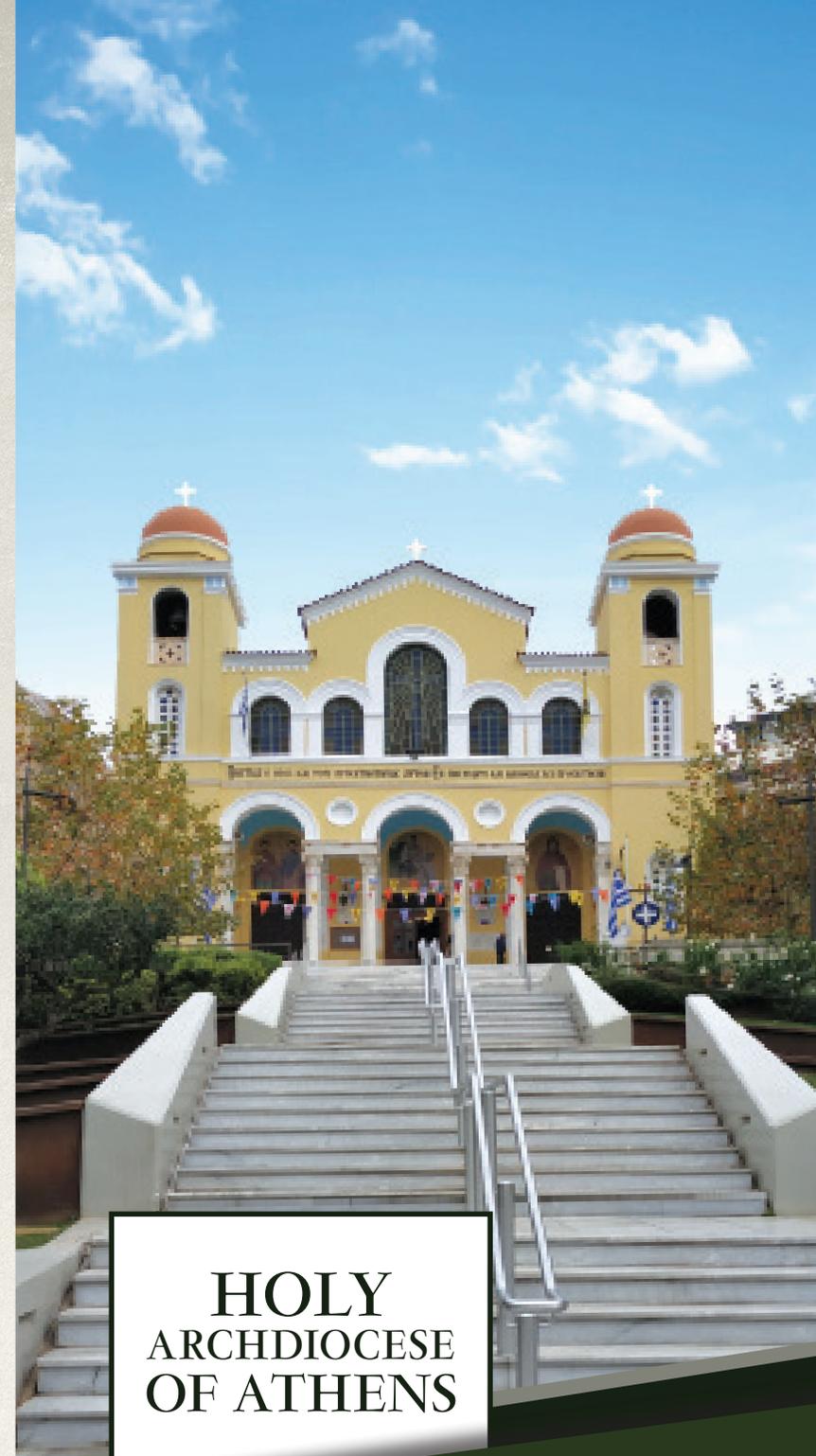


Exterior view of the "Home for the Aged"



The facilities of the Youth Centre

See more in the book of Father Kyriakos Tsouros: "Agios Spyridon Stadiou (Pagratiou) - A brief historical review"



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